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to be his most loyal adherents, such as the Kenites, Rechabites, and Nazarites, retained the nomadic life of the desert. From the time of the conquest onward Yahweh was regarded as hostile to the baals of Canaan. If he himself had been one of these baals, this antithesis could never have arisen. This book is only another illustration of the *reductio ad absurdum* that results when the mythological method is applied to Hebrew tradition.

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A NEW COMMENTARY ON THE PROPHETS

This volume¹ in this series completes the minor Prophets—that portion of the Old Testament originally undertaken by President Harper but of which he was able to complete only the first part (Amos-Hosea).

Of the prophets included in this volume, Haggai and Zechariah were assigned to Professor Mitchell, Malachi to Professor Smith, and Jonah to Professor Bewer, represented respectively by pages 362, 88, and 65. It will thus be seen that the largest share of the labor has fallen upon Professor Mitchell.

In general it may be said that the same methods hitherto followed in this series and the same high standard of excellence characterize the work of these eminent scholars.

Haggai and Zechariah, i-viii, bring up a number of important historical problems, and one turns with interest to note the author's conclusions, especially in reference to the vexed question of the return from exile, *ca.* 537 B.C., and the events immediately following, the record of which is found in Ezra 1:1—4:5, 24. Mitchell's treatment of the Chronicler is not only just but generous. His conclusion is practically the same as that of G. A. Smith in the *Expositor* series,² that the historicity of this event must be accepted, even though recorded by the late Chronicler. In reference, however, to the biblical account of an effort to begin the Temple (Ezra 3:8 ff.) he concludes that "the whole account is simply the product of an attempt to bring the facts with reference to the restoration of the temple into harmony with an unfulfilled prediction on the subject and has no historic value." (p. 11).

¹ *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah.* By Professors H. G. Mitchell, D.D., J. M. Powis Smith, Ph.D., and Julius A. Bewer, Ph.D. i-xxvi+362+88+65 pages. New York: Scribner, 1912. \$3.00.

² G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets*, II, 204 ff.

One has a thankless task in defending the Chronicler, whose untrustworthiness in so many instances, especially in his view of pre-exilic history, is so manifest. Nevertheless the judgment of such scholars as G. A. Smith and Driver seems reasonable, that in all probability there was an attempt to begin the Temple immediately after the Return, even if the work was not carried very far.¹ The author's objection to the historicity of the opposition of the adversaries (Ezra 4:4 f.), as reflecting the later hatred of the Jews for the Samaritans has much in its favor, considering the Chronicler's tendency to transfer later conditions to earlier times. On the other hand, it seems clear from Zechariah that the Jewish community prior to 520 B.C. had been subjected to annoyances in which the opposition mentioned in Ezra might well have been included (cf. 8:10b).

The historical setting assigned to the first three visions of Zechariah (1:7—2:5) is interesting. Instead of referring them to the events and conditions contemporary with the prophet's day, i.e., the disturbances in the East in the early days of Darius, 522 ff. B.C., the author considers them reviews of the years immediately preceding the downfall of the Babylonian empire, 538 B.C., or, to give his own description, "successive stages in the history of the Restoration." Thus in the first vision (1:7—17), vs. 11, stating that "the earth sitteth still and is at rest," he thinks was not applicable to 519 B.C., when Darius was putting down formidable insurrections (p. 121), and so "there remains no alternative but with Van Hoonacker to regard the vision as a picture of the past" (p. 122), i.e., the exile prior to 538 B.C. He believes the language of vs. 16 refers to Isa. 40:3 ff., etc., and he cites Amos, chap. 7, as an illustration of a similar employment of vision to describe the past. In the second vision (1:18—21) the reference is to the overthrow of Babylon in 538 B.C. by supernatural agencies represented by four workmen; and the third vision (2:1—5) is an attempt to forecast the future.

There is much in this view of the initial visions to commend itself. The usual interpretation that the prophet is referring to contemporary history has obvious objections, such as the conception in 1:11, already referred to, that the world was peaceful; and also as to what powers the prophet here had in mind. Still with all the difficulties involved the usual view seems on the whole the more probable one, viz., that Zechariah was thinking of the overthrow of the Persian empire. It is evident that both Haggai and Zechariah were expecting that the messianic kingdom was to be established in the near future, and it must have been apparent

¹ *Ibid.*, 215 ff.; Driver, "Minor Prophets," *Century Bible*, II, 146-48.

to them that one of the necessary preliminaries would be the downfall of the Persian power (and possibly all world-powers; cf. the representation in Ezek., chaps. 38 f.), just as it was clear to the great prophet of the exile (Isa., chaps. 40-55) that Babylon must fall before the Jewish captives would be permitted to return home. Possibly some of the disappointment and natural resentment felt by the Jews because the Persians had not done more for the community at Jerusalem between 537-520 B.C. may be reflected in these visions. Perhaps also Zechariah had in mind the city of Babylon which had escaped so easily at the hands of Cyrus in 538 B.C. and which was now in revolt against Darius. To this prophet who revered the words of his great predecessor in the exile the destruction of this city by Darius might well seem a necessary event before the messianic age was ushered in. One great prediction of Deutero-Isaiah had been fulfilled, at least in measure, viz., the Return. Would not this lead to the expectation that other important predictions of that prophet would be realized, such as the destruction of Babylon and the setting up of the messianic kingdom?

Pp. 232-59 are devoted to a thorough discussion of the authorship and date of the difficult section Zech., chaps. 9-14, and pp. 260-357 to the exposition of the text. The conclusion reached as to the dating of these chapters is as follows: "The introductory verses (9:1-10) are a distinct prophecy written soon after the battle of Issus (333 B.C.). This was made the text for a more extended utterance (9:11-11:3) which dates from the reign of Ptolemy III (247-222 B.C.). A third writer, soon after the battle of Raphia (217 B.C.), supplemented this combined work by a pessimistic picture (11:4-17 with 13:7-9) of the situation as he saw it. About the same time a fourth, with apocalyptic tendencies, undertook to present the whole subject in a more optimistic light, the result being 12:1-13:6 and 14" (pp. 258 f.).

Professor Smith dates Malachi immediately before Nehemiah's reforms (p. 8), in preference to immediately before Ezra's mission, 458 B.C. (e.g., G. A. Smith), or just before Nehemiah's second mission to Jerusalem, 432 B.C. (e.g., Kirkpatrick).¹ He considers that this anonymous prophecy helped to prepare the way for Nehemiah's reforms. An excellent summary of the message of this prophecy is given (pp. 11-15) from which these sentences may be cited: "The thought that piety is its own reward, that God is his own best gift, finds no expression from him. But, at a time when faith was wavering he met his contemporaries

¹ G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets*, II, 337 f.; Kirkpatrick, *Doctrine of the Prophets*, pp. 501 f.

on their own ground, and thrilled their hearts with the assurance that the dawn of the Golden Age was at hand" (p. 15).

One of the very interesting questions of this prophecy is: To whom does the prophet refer in 1:11? Between the two leading interpretations referring it either to the acceptability of the worship of the heathen by Jehovah, or to the worship on the part of the Jews of the dispersion, Dr. Smith prefers the latter. His reasons for this conclusion are, especially, the emphasis on ritualism in this prophecy, which is not consonant with such a favorable view of the worship of the heathen world, and also the prophet's opposition to mixed marriages, which points in the same direction. Further, this conclusion, he maintains, is supported by the Elephantine papyri, which have revealed the fact of Jehovah-worship at the temple in Egypt and hence the inference that he was similarly worshiped at other Jewish centers.

These are strong arguments. This interpretation seems at first thought easier and more natural in view of the prophet's religious temperament and outlook. It is in line with one of the interpretations of Ps. 87.¹ But when all has been said, is the alternative view as impossible as the writer considers it to be, that the prophet here transcended his usual theological and national limitations? Three things at least can be said in its favor. Other prophets had attained, even if rarely, a similar catholic outlook. Would it not be natural for this prophet, stirred by deep indignation over the unworthy conduct of his people, as a means of rebuking them and "provoking" them "unto good works," to idealize the worship of the heathen? (Cf. Jer. 2:10 ff.; also Jonah)? And it certainly is in accordance with human nature to cherish more easily lofty conceptions of the heathen world at a distance than to treat in a spirit of brotherly comprehension the heathen near at hand, especially when as in this instance the heathen (i.e., the Samaritans, etc.) interfered with certain very definite ideals and policies cherished by the Puritan party of the Jewish community here represented by this prophet.

Dr. Bewer's commentary on Jonah is scholarly, painstaking, comprehensive, discussing all questions which legitimately are connected with this much misunderstood book. Moreover, it is a most readable commentary marked by literary charm. It is a very interesting exposition of a most interesting book—two things which do not always go together.

In the author's introduction to the prophecy is found an excellent presentation of the origin and purpose of the story (pp. 6-11). Between

¹ Cf. Davies on Ps. 87 (*Century Bible*).

the claims of allegory and parable Dr. Bewer decides in favor of the latter (p. 10), notwithstanding the support received from Jer. 51:34 f., 44 that the great fish is employed allegorically for Babylonia. Many here will prefer G. A. Smith's interpretation in the *Expositor's Bible* series.

In the commentary on Genesis in this series Dr. Skinner omitted any discussion of a problem, which hitherto has been considered a vital one, viz., the teaching of the early chapters of Genesis as related to science. He did so on the ground that the question is practically a past issue. One wonders how much longer it will be necessary, or seem incumbent on the part of Old Testament scholars, to devote time and space to prove the fact that Jonah is not to be interpreted as a historical book. However, only three pages are given to this topic, but all that is necessary is expressed within this compass.

The discussion of the unity of the book (pp. 13-21) seems a subject less called for, since apart from the poem, chap. 2, the unity of the narrative seems evident enough. It is such attempts on the part of critics, whose views are here refuted by Dr. Bewer, which serve as much as anything else to cast discredit on critical methods. The writer has carefully canvassed the field and has established, it would seem to the satisfaction of any candid mind, that the contention of such critics does not rest on valid grounds.

The purpose of the author of Jonah he states as follows: "He wants to teach the narrow, blind, prejudiced, fanatic Jews of which Jonah is but the type, that

The love of God is broader than the measures of man's mind, and the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.

But we make his love too narrow by false limits of our own! It embraces all men, not only Israel, even Israel's enemies! For all men are God's creatures. He is the God of all and just as full of love and care for heathen as for the Jews and just as ready to pardon them, if they abandon their sins and resort to Him. Should we not share His love and His purposes?" (p. 64).

To say that Dr. Bewer's commentary on Jonah ranks with G. A. Smith's exposition of the book is sufficient commendation to those who are familiar with the work of the brilliant Scottish scholar.

Students of the Old Testament are under deep and lasting obligation to these three American scholars, who have completed the exposition of the Minor Prophets in this notable series.

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